Old traditions die hard at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, but racing teams needed garages that not only offered space flexibility but could withstand the pace of the Indy 500.

ROOM TO MOVE AT INDY

Gasoline Alley Adds Flexibility with Demountables

At the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, site of the annual Indianapolis 500 auto race, old traditions die hard.

That’s why the start/finish line is still paved with a ribbon of bricks—reminiscent of the 3,200,000 bricks that originally made up the racing surface of the track.

That’s why peanuts are never sold at Speedway concession stands — they’re considered bad luck.

And that’s why the color green was taboo at Indy until the mid-1960’s, when Jim Clark brought one of the very first rear-engined cars to the Speedway from England. (After finishing a strong second in 1964, he came back the following year, led nearly every lap and won the race by a two-minute margin. His car was British Racing Green.)

Despite tradition, when the racing teams finally started rolling in on May 1 for the 70th running of the classic 500-mile race, they were surprised to see some non-traditional developments in ‘Gasoline Alley,’ the world famous garage area on the infield where the raced cars are kept in top running condition.

The former garage complex—two cinder-block buildings containing 88 garages, each no bigger than a horse stall — was replaced with a modern three-building configuration of 96 garage spaces. The new buildings were constructed with pre-stressed concrete wall and roof panels, but the most innovative feature involves the interior, where the GB-350 Movable Wall System, manufactured by Gold Bond
Building Products, was mated with Gold Bond’s new Saxon® steel-faced Gypsum Wallboard panels.

Ravaged by time, the old garage complex was more than adequate for the powerful, but narrow, front-engined roadsters that dominated the track from the inaugural race in 1911 through the early decade of the 1940s. But as race car designs evolved, the move was toward lower, wider cars and the garages suddenly became cramped.

Expansion Potential . . .

The new design of the garage interiors provides a high resistance to abusive treatment along with easy maintenance. But for the first time in the history of the Speedway, the new system also offers the flexibility to quickly remove the crosswall partitions that separate garage spaces, thus allowing multi-car teams to transform several individual garages into one large barrier-free enclosure.

For example, last May the legendary A.F. Foyt, seeking an unprecedented fifth win at Indianapolis, brought five cars for this year’s race. With the new garage complex, he was able to keep all five cars, side by side, in a single area. Previously, he would have had to settle for five totally separate single-car garages.

“It is quite ironic,” one Gold Bond spokesman revealed, “that this particular use for the Saxon panels so perfectly demonstrates the versatility of steel-faced gypsum wallboard since the Indianapolis Speedway is one of our first orders for this product.”

The Saxon panels have been introduced to the trade as a component of the GB-350 Movable Wall System, through Gold Bond’s national sales network, earlier this year.

In addition to the durability and easy maintenance, the panels feature steel wrapped edges, which create a smooth decorative look at the panel seams and also facilitate installation.

The Saxon panels are available in 24-inch or 30-inch widths and either eight, nine or ten-foot heights. The standard colors are beige and off white.

Installed by Terstep Co., Inc., Noblesville, IN, (an AWCI member since 1979) the project at the Speedway actually involves 12-foot high walls. The removable eight-foot Saxon panels are installed below non-removable, four-foot bulkhead panels made of Gold Bond Armor Wall, 5/8-inch gypsum panels laminated with rigid 22 mil vinyl for high durability.

According to Jim Kleinhelter, Jr., Terstep Vice President, approximately 2,000 linear feet of beige Saxon panels are installed along with an additional 2,000 linear feet of Light Beige Armor Wall.

“It was a pretty exciting project,” Mr. Kleinhelter explained, “We drilled holes in the concrete floor and installed flush Tap-Con plastic inserts so that, if a partition wall is removed to expand a garage, the floor area in between the adjoining spaces will remain flat with no protruding hardware.”

Security and Instant Demountability . . .

Designed with a patented gravity-lock fastener, the Gold Bond GB-350 System and Saxon panels provide both sound insulation and security to the garage spaces on either side of the cross-partitions.

Because of their competitive “super-secret” engine development work and sophisticated ground-effects suspension systems, professional racing teams require strict garage security.

However, the system is engineered so that individual panels can be removed quickly. Its non-progressive feature—the ability to remove a single panel anywhere in the wall rather than progressively—aids reconfiguration and design flexibility.
“In addition to the durability and easy maintenance, the panels feature steel wrapped edges, which create a smooth decorative look at the panel seams and also facilitate installation.”

According to the master partitions specialist, “The people at the Speedway take great pride in their facility. They prepared a specific list of criteria for the Gasoline Alley project. The Gold Bond Saxon panels, in combination with the GB-350 System, met every requirement.”

Old traditions may die hard at Indianapolis Motor Speedway, but new technologies and innovative designs have always been the stuff race history is made of. The rain-delayed 70th running of the Indianapolis 500 was no different.

Designed to endure exceptionally rough treatment, movable steel-faced gypsum panels are also ideal for corporate facilities, hospitals, laboratories, workshops and computer “clean rooms.”